CHAPTER XI

PUBLIC LIFE

§1

EXTEENAL circumstances are responsible for the fact that the Jews' participation in public life began only at a comparatively recent date. For centuries, Church and State had combined to inveigh against the occupation by Jews of any position of authority, and the exclusion remained effective until a hundred and fifty years ago. The first breach in the theory was made by the American Declaration of Independence, in 1775; it was introduced into Europe with the Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789, followed by the formal emancipation of the French Jews in 1790. The following eighty years saw the gradual imitation of this example in Western Europe. Thus, in England, municipal rights were conceded in 1831-1835, and Jews were first admitted to the House of Commons in 1858, and to the Lords in 1886, After 1870, Emancipation was established, in name at least, in all the so-called "civilised" world. The only exception was Russia, where persecution continued in an exaggerated form, accompanied by frequent outbreaks of violence, as long as the authority of the Czars was maintained.

For this reason, any examination of the part played by Jews in public life after 70 A.D. must necessarily be

restricted almost entirely to very recent times. In the Roman Empire, of course, exclusion was by no means complete: and we find Jews participating amply in